

**Written Testimony by
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- ◆ The main goals of the foster care system should be to provide permanency for every child or teenager who enters and exits the system through safe and nurturing homes where they are happy and stable. The system should first explore reunification and then look for any possible relative and if all else fails then result to other family options. Sibling groups should be taken into high considerations. The following are outcomes to look for:
 - All measures are taken to ensure permanency
 - When statistics of runaways, homelessness, juvenile delinquency etc. decrease.
 - No negative stories in the newspaper and full accountability is in place to hold the system responsible for actions or lack of.
 - The foster youth's emotional needs are met as well as basic.
- ◆ Leadership is key. We need to see stability in our leadership in Los Angeles County. In spite of the instability in leadership Los Angeles County has made many improvements in recent years through new innovative programs. The programs need to be consistent and widely utilized. The county has adopted models like Family to Family, Family Conferencing and Wraparound Services that need to happen on a much greater scale. Emancipation services are currently under redesign to improve organization and accessibility of services and an enhanced data tracking system. Changes are definitely on the way.
- ◆ The most pressing challenge overall is the engagement of Children and Families in the planning process. The system can't continue to plan people's lives without their input. In the process of altering someone's life, right or wrong they deserve to be heard. Not only should they be invited to often-closed meetings of confidentiality but they also need to be respected when they come. Here are things that should be considered.
 - Children and Families should not be seen as recipients coming to the table but as resources, because they truly have the answers to fix most of the problems, the system just doesn't know that.
 - Restoring families should be a priority since we know that many foster youth emancipate and return to the same dysfunctional family environments.
 - Foster youth have to plan their lives along with the social workers. Social workers have a way of making decision for you not with you.
 - There is a strong need for Family shelters, detox programs (for families and youth) and family resources centers where families can go and get help prior to a crisis.

- ◆ Public expectations should be to get involved and that “You have to become the change you ultimately want to see” Everyone has responsibility to each child that enters the gates of the system and each family affected by the system. The public should also be engaged and involved. Everyone has to ensure that this system is held accountable to the children and families. The system can’t continue to be reactive but must become proactive to the needs of families. The system also has to take a strength-based approach instead of a dysfunctional approach that leads to how they mentally view children and families through stereotypical mindsets and attitudes that lead to practice. One role to take is to ensure that the public is properly educated on who the children and families really are because they’re not only the families on the news.